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COUNTRY China

SUBJECT Relaxation of Control over Families of
Overseas Chinese/Loss of Authority by Farmers Union

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1. Since the Spring of 1953, word has come from time to time that Communist Chinese authorities have relaxed their control on the families of the overseas Chinese to a great extent. They have generally reclassified these families; now designating them as "middle class farmers" rather than as "big overseas landlords". These people are even allowed to move from the countryside to the city if they do not want to continue to live in the village. Furthermore, it seems that there is now no censorship whatsoever.

2. The latest missive came on 16 June 1953/ from a woman in Taishan, Kwangtung, who has not been heard from for over a year and was almost given up for dead by her husband. Then she suddenly sent her husband a long letter describing what had happened during the past two years. In her letter, she said:

"Grandfather, second uncle and second aunt were beaten to death. And third aunt's back was broken. They could have saved themselves if they were a little more patient and not so harsh towards the then officers of the Farmers Union, who are now almost all liquidated by the regular official agents."

3. She herself was imprisoned twice and was beaten up many times. Very often she gave up hope of living through their tortures. She was not allowed to see her daughter. Their house, all household goods and personal clothing were sealed but not confiscated. "By the grace of the regular officials", she is now "cleared and released". She went home and found that nothing had been touched. However, her clothing had moldered and rotted because of lack of airing over a long period. She may now move freely again and is able to send her daughter to school in Canton. She says that she herself is permitted to move to Canton but that she wants to stay in the village a little while longer to see how things will develop.
4. Whereas it was previously reported that there were over 50 persons in this village who died at the hands of the hoodlums from the Farmers Union, this woman mentioned only the deaths of "grandfather, second uncle and aunt". The others might have been merely tortured but not put to death.

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5. She added that the Farmers Union has been stripped of its privileges and authority. According to her letter, almost all authority now rests with the local police.
6. Between the lines, she hinted that this change of policy might be an inducement to the overseas Chinese to send money home; consequently, nowhere in the letter did she mention any money matters. Furthermore, she said that she does not know how long this policy will hold; she still fears that the lightheaded methods will be used again in the future. Before ending the letter, she said that it was really fortunate for her husband to have returned to the US at the time when the Communist hordes were driving down south to Canton from Hunan. "You would have been executed for sure if you were home", she said.
7. It may be added here that this letter does not bear any trace of censorship.

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